



Senate Gives Final Approval for \$82.57 Billion Spending Package for Veterans Affairs and Military Construction

-- Bill includes language preventing the VA from selling any land at the West Los Angeles campus until approved by Appropriations Committee --

November 18, 2005

Washington, DC – The U.S. Senate today gave its final approval to a \$82.57 billion spending package that provides \$70.25 billion for veterans, \$12.167 billion for military construction, family housing, and environmental cleanup projects, and \$157.6 million for related agencies, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today announced.

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas) is Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veteran Affairs, and Senator Feinstein is Ranking Member of the subcommittee.

Department of Veterans Affairs

The spending package provides \$70.25 billion to fund the Department of Veterans Affairs, including an additional \$2.5 billion above the President's original budget request for the Department of Veterans Affairs to shore up a shortfall in medical care. Of this amount, \$1.225 billion has been deemed contingent emergency funding and therefore requires no offset.

Additionally, there is \$1.1 billion to make up for Administration policy changes that were rejected, including enrollment fees on veterans, increased pharmaceutical co-payments, and changes to eligibility requirements for veterans in extended care State Homes.

“The conference report provides for the infrastructure needs of our military and the health care and other needs of our veterans,” Senator Feinstein said. **“But nothing in this bill is more important than the funding we provide to meet the medical needs of our veterans. As the Senator from the State with the largest population of veterans, I cannot overstate the importance of this issue. We’ve got to support our veterans to the fullest extent possible.”**

“This nation owes our veterans a great debt of gratitude for protecting and defending our nation. With this bill, Congress lives up to its responsibilities and provides more than \$70 billion for veterans health care, benefits and the infrastructure which ensures that we can continue to serve them in the future.”

“During this process, it was revealed that there was a funding shortfall of more than a billion dollars in the department’s FY 05 budget for medical care, and a projected shortfall of more than billion dollars in FY 06. I am pleased that we have closed the gap and can fulfill our commitment to our veterans.”

“I am also pleased that the bill includes language preventing the VA from selling any land at the West Los Angeles property unless it is approved by the Appropriations Committee,” Senator Feinstein said. “The West Los Angeles VA property was originally donated to honor the service of our veterans, and I believe that we must keep it in the hands of our Veterans. I will fight to ensure that this land is preserved for the direct benefit of veterans.”

Veterans Benefits - \$37.36 billion

This is mainly mandatory spending, which includes

- Disability and survivors benefits
- Pensions for disabled veterans
- Education benefits
- Life insurance and home-ownership benefits.

Veterans Health Administration - \$29.115 billion (*Information Technology Projects which were included in this account have been moved to Departmental Administration*)

- Medical Services - \$22.547 billion
- Medical Administration - \$2.858 billion
- Medical Facilities - \$3.298 billion
- Medical and Prosthetic Research - \$412 million

Departmental Administration - \$2.851 billion (*this includes \$1.214 billion for Information Technology which was previously appropriated under Veterans Health Administration*)

Construction - \$923 million (*this includes \$85 million for grants for construction of State Extended Facilities*)

California Items of Interest

- Creates three “Centers of Excellence” for Mental Health/Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, one of which is at the San Diego, CA, Veterans Affairs Medical Center
- Funds grants to States for Extended Care Facilities at \$85 million.
- Prevents the VA from moving forward selling any land at the West Los Angeles campus until approved by the Committee on Appropriations
- Provides funding for construction of a national veterans cemetery in Bakersfield, Calif.
- Directs the VA to report back to the Committee on plans for the land at Ford Ord that is set aside for a cemetery.

Other items of Interest

- The agreement emphasizes mental care by designating \$2.2 billion for mental health
- Requires the VA to brief the Committees on Appropriations on their financial situation on a quarterly basis

Senate provisions which stand:

- Directs the VA to work in conjunction with the San Francisco VA to develop preliminary guidelines and benchmarks for implementing a National Medical Quality Improvement Program. San Francisco has recorded the best overall performance in the VA's National Surgical Quality Improvement Program and is best poised to assist the VA in developing this new program.
- Commends the VA for entering into discussions regarding the establishment of a therapeutic housing program for homeless veterans on the campus of the VA's Sepulveda Ambulatory Care Center in North Hills, CA.
- Directs the VA to continue to work closely with the Department of Defense to ensure that adequate notations are included in service members' medical records with regard to mefloquine use and adverse side effects prior to separation from the military.

Military Construction

The spending package provides \$12.167 billion to fund construction, housing, and remediation projects at U.S. military bases across the nation and around the world.

“With ongoing operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the war on Terror, it is critical that we do everything we can to support our men and women in uniform,” Senator Feinstein said. **“This bill funds the construction of needed family housing and training facilities at home and abroad. These facilities are crucial to the well being of our troops and will help ensure that we attract and retain the highest quality personnel.”**

The funding includes:

- **\$5.1 billion for military construction** -- used for the construction of barracks, child development centers, hospitals and medical facilities, and funding for guard and reserve units.
- **\$4.02 billion for family housing construction and operations** -- used for the construction of new family housing as well as improvements and maintenance of existing housing units.
- **\$1.5 billion for the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round.** The bill also prohibits the Department of Defense from spending funds for projects approved for closure from being diverted to other projects without specific congressional approval.

- **\$255 million for environmental cleanup associated with previous BRAC rounds.**
This includes \$20,000,000 above the President's budget request to the BRAC 1990 general account to accelerate Army and Air Force environmental remediation efforts.

The Milcon/VA Conference includes over \$488 million in military construction projects for California. A list of California projects funded in the bill follows:

For the Army:

CONCORD:

PIER SECURITY UPGRADE	8,600,000
UPGRADE OUTLOAD FACILITIES	3,250,000

FORT IRWIN:

MILITARY OPERATIONS URBAN TERRAIN PH 1	12,000,000
LAND ACQUISITION PH 3	5,000,000

For the Army Guard:

ROSEVILLE: READINESS CENTER, ADDITION	2,941,000
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For the Army Reserve:

FORT HUNTER LIGGETT:

URBAN ASSAULT COURSE	1,500,000
SHOOT HOUSE	1,700,000

For the Navy:

CAMP PENDLETON:

ASSAULT BREACHER VEHICLE FACILITY	5,160,000
BACHELOR QUARTERS - HEADQUARTERS	19,620,000
FLIGHT LINE SECURITY FENCE	1,400,000
RECLAMATION/CONVEYANCE (INC 1)	25,436,000

CHINA LAKE: ADVANCED SENSOR LAB	19,158,000
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EL CENTRO: APRON & HANGAR (INCR II)	18,666,000
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LEMOORE:

REPLACE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER	8,480,000
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For the Air Force:

BEALE AFB:

GLOBAL HAWK MAINTENANCE HANGAR	14,200,000
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EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE:

MAINBASE RUNWAY, PHASE 1	37,000,000
REPLACE FAMILY HOUSING (226 UNITS)	59,699,000

TRAVIS AFB:	
C-17 ADD COMPOSITE SHOP	3,200,000
C-17 MAINTENANCE TRAINING FACILITY	8,100,000
GLOBAL REACH DEPLOYMENT CENTER	19,000,000
C-17 ADDITION TO LIFE SUPPORT CENTER	1,300,000

VANDENBERG AFB:	FITNESS CENTER	16,845,000
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For the Air Guard:

FRESNO YOSEMITE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT:	
ALERT CREW QUARTERS FACILITY	3,000,000

Defense-wide facilities:

BEALE AFB:	
CLINIC ADDITION/ALTERATION	18,000,000

CORONADO:

SPECIAL OPS TRAINING SUPPORT FACILITIES	13,350,000
SPECIAL OPS APPLIED INSTRUCTION FACILITY	4,000,000
SPECIAL OPS SEAL TEAM OPERATIONS/ SUPPORT FACILITY	11,000,000

DEFENSE DISTRIBUTION DEPOT-TRACY:

REPLACE GENERAL PURPOSE WAREHOUSE	33,635,000
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MIRAMAR:

REPLACE STORAGE/DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM	23,000,000
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SAN DIEGO: PATIENT PARKING FACILITY	15,000,000
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Other California Projects

- \$10,900,000 for an Aerospace Ground Equipment Facility (AGE) at Travis Air Force Base.
- \$8,599, 000 for a dining facility at San Luis Obispo for the Army Guard.
- \$1,500,000 for an urban combat course at Camp Roberts for the Army Guard.
- \$1,350,000 to resurface pavement for the 126th Air Medevac at Mather Air Force Base.
- \$990,000 for the planning and design of a Special Operations Forces, Special Boat Team Operations Support Facility at Naval Base Coronado for the Navy Seals.
- \$960,000 to plan and design a replacement Aircraft Maintenance Hangar and Shops at March Air Reserve Base.
- \$340,000 to plan and design a replacement Vehicle Maintenance Complex at Fresno Yosemite International Airport
- \$4,250,000 for a dining facility at Fort Irwin

- \$5,070,000 for a Provost Marshall screening facility at Miramar Marine Corps Air Station
- \$6,500,000 for an addition to Glasgow Hall at the Naval Post Graduate School
- \$3,000,000 to improve the waste water treatment facility at Twentynine Palms
- \$21,000,000 for a (MOUT) Military Operations in Urban Terrain facility at Twentynine Palms
- \$3,900,000 for a C-17 tire and wheel shop at Travis Air Force Base

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